



Crime Watch

Deceptive Mailings

(NAPSA)—Consumer fraud is a big business. Based on the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's receipt of about 75,000 consumer fraud complaints each year, fraud remains a constant threat to the American consumer.



Consumers should always be leery of mailings that seem too good to be true.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the primary law enforcement agency that investigates mail fraud, encourages consumers to be aware and educated—not duped. They offer the following schemes as examples of what to look out for:

- **Bogus employment opportunities.** These ads usually feature claims of “thousands of high-paying government jobs.” However, what you end up paying for is material that you could have gotten free from the government agency—which may or may not have job openings.

- **Phony charitable solicitations.** Either your money never gets to the charity, or the charity doesn't exist at all.

- **Work-at-home schemes.** Not only don't these scams guarantee regular salaried employment, but you will have to invest money before you learn how a plan works. Always suspect an ad claiming you can earn unusually high income with little or no effort.

- **Prizes or sweepstakes.** If you have to pay a processing fee, it's generally a scam. The prizes are never anything of real value.

To learn more, or to report a fraud online, visit the U.S. Postal Inspection Service Web site at www.usps.com/postalinspectors.